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ABSTRACT

A combined report of the four Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDCs) and their partners focuses on selected outreach and research activities, projects, and accomplishments in fiscal year 1997. The report is organized around five topics identified as key issues for the mid 1990s: (1) improving economic competitiveness, diversity, and adaptability of small or rural communities; (2) linking natural resource industries with community and environmental resources; (3) increasing community capacity to deal with change; (4) enhancing self-reliance of families and communities; and (5) facilitating development of policies that enhance the well-being of rural people and small towns. For each topic, brief project descriptions provide insight into the number and diversity of people involved in development of RRDC programs, links to other organizations and institutions, integration of research and outreach, relevance to regional or national issues, and effects on rural people. Challenges faced by RRDCs include rapidly changing economic and policy settings, new cadres of professionals involved in rural development without access to training and research support, increasing demands for accountability for all programs, shrinking resources in the public sector, increasing ethnic diversity, and environmental conflicts. (CDS)

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1997 Program Report

of the Four Regional Rural Development Centers

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1997 Program Report

of the Four Regional Rural Development Centers

March 1998

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Preface

This is a combined report of selected outreach and research activities, projects and accomplishments of the four Regional Rural Development Centers and their partners in fiscal year 1997. The RRDCs are linked to the land-grant institutions and seek to improve the social and economic well-being of rural people. The variety of projects and diversity of people and organizations involved in the work of the RRDCs attest to the impact of their work and reveal how this work touches rural people and communities.

The RRDCs have two audiences for their services and products: direct users and end users. Direct users are the professionals conducting research and developing and delivering educational programs in land-grant and other educational institutions and organizations. End users are the rural people and their communities who receive the benefits through the rural development research and education professionals of the land-grant and other educational institutions and organizations.

This report is organized around five topics that have been identified as key issues for the mid 1990s:

1. Improving Economic Competitiveness, Diversity and Adaptability of Small and/or Rural Communities
2. Linking Natural Resource Industries with Community and Environmental Resources
3. Increasing Community Capacity to Deal with Change
4. Enhancing Self-reliance of Families and Communities
5. Facilitating Development of Policies that Enhance the Well-being of Rural People and Small Towns

Each of the RRDCs has devoted considerable resources over the past year to research and outreach projects related to these key issues. (The RRDC that is conducting and/or sponsoring the project is listed in parenthesis at the end of each listing.) While our main partners are within the land-grant system, we also work with State Rural Development Councils, Resource Conservation and Development Councils, and a wide range of private sector entities who share a concern for rural people and places. In some cases the projects were collaborative efforts of all four RRDCs and the program was national in scope.

The projects are described briefly to provide some insight into the number and diversity of people involved in the development of RRDC programs, the links to other organizations and institutions, the integration of research and outreach functions, the relevance to regional or national issues, and the actual and potential

effects on the well-being of rural people. The RRDCs support research that directly informs education and action that is reflective and cumulative. The RRDCs work hard at integrating research and Extension in the best tradition of the land-grant system.

Why Do the RRDCs Exist?

One-quarter of the nation's population live in rural areas. There is a need to invest in research and education to help these people and their communities find viable alternatives and opportunities for the future. The land-grant institutions have a long history of applied scholarship and an established presence in rural communities dealing with rural issues. For more than 25 years the RRDCs have worked across state lines with land-grant faculty to expand this work and make it more readily available. With the dramatic changes at the end of the 20th century, including economics with globalization and governments with devolution, research concerning the alternatives for rural people and places is more important than ever.

Understanding Rural Development and Community Building

Programs designed for metropolitan areas do not adapt well to rural situations, nor do agricultural programs solve the economic problems of rural communities. With the changes in the 1996 Farm Bill, agricultural communities will need to become even more flexible and more market responsive. Economic development is not the sole answer. The complex social problems in rural areas make it necessary to strengthen the ability of rural leaders to understand the effects of national and international policies and events on local communities and to develop responses reflecting local needs, values and resources. This will require increased research on rural issues as well as improved identification and education for community leaders.

Role of Regional Rural Development Centers

The four Regional Rural Development Centers support and strengthen individual state efforts in rural areas by developing networks of university research and Extension faculty from a variety of disciplines to address rural issues. Strategies for dealing with those issues are developed by leaders across the region and the nation and are shared with rural communities via conferences, publications and other educational activities and materials. Each RRDC has the flexibility to adapt its program to meet the changing needs within its region. The RRDCs collaborate with state, regional, and national public and private organizations and with each other to leverage support from a variety of sources to supplement their regional and federal funding and to increase program effectiveness. The RRDCs work in liaison with research and Extension faculty; with state, regional and national policy makers; with community decision-makers; and with other rural development professionals.

Rural Development Challenges

The RRDCs are organized to respond rapidly to rural needs in their regions and to collaborate to provide interregional and national programs on critical rural development issues. Quick response has given the RRDCs the opportunity to be productive in adjusting to constantly changing conditions. However, the RRDCs face several challenges:

- Rapidly changing economic and policy settings where prior knowledge of processes and products no longer hold.
- New cadres of professionals involved in rural development without access to training and research support.
- Increasing demands for accountability for all programs.
- Shrinking resources in the public sector requiring more individual and community self help.
- Increasing ethnic diversity and a rural population under 18 or over 65.
- Conflicts arising over the use of our natural resources and environment. Rural stake holders are caught in many of these controversies.

Addressing the Challenges

The RRDCs receive modest funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture through the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service. Increasingly, private foundations and other governmental agencies are also investing in the work of the RRDCs. Supplemental funding from these foundations has been very important to effective RRDC work.

In July 1991 the Regional Rural Development Centers underwent a national review by the Extension Service and the Cooperative State Research Service. The report of the review panel strongly endorsed the RRDCs, saying they "performed an extremely valuable and useful catalytic role in research and Extension programs ... If the centers did not exist today, they would have to be invented."

1. Improving Economic Competitiveness, Diversity and Adaptability of Small and/or Rural Communities

Rural communities have new challenges in the globalization that is currently underway. Numerous strategies can build local networks as well as global connections. Coordinated community activities tend to have results that increase the economic well-being of community members. Communities in Economic Transition and Business Retention and Expansion are among the efforts of the Regional Rural Development Centers that address this goal.

1998 National Extension Tourism Conference

"Tourism Innovations: Development, Policy & Markets" is the theme of the 1998 National Extension Tourism Conference scheduled for May 17-20, 1998, in Grantville, Pennsylvania. There will be five tracks: 1) Public Policies, Issues, Challenges and Opportunities; 2) The Role of Tourism in Local Economies; 3) Enhancing the Visitor Experience; 4) Specialized Tourism Niches; and 5) Expanding Tourism Opportunities. Integrated tours, poster sessions, exhibits/displays, and concurrent and plenary sessions are designed to operationalize these tracks. A post conference workshop titled "Assessing the Economic Impacts from Tourism" will be held on May 20, 1998. All four Regional Rural Development Centers are supporting this conference, with the Northeast Center providing the coordination. *(NERCRD, NCRCRD, SRDC, WRDC)*

Business Retention and Expansion

Extension specialists from the University of Delaware, the University of Minnesota and West Virginia University conducted five national business retention and expansion master consultant training sessions in the United States and Canada. Three additional training sessions are planned nationally, and three more will be offered within the Northeast region, most likely in Maine, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Materials are being translated into French for use in Morocco and Canada, and into Polish for use in Poland. Retaining and expanding existing business is an effective alternative to industrial recruitment. The community development approach to solving business problems is what makes these materials and this training so appealing. The materials were written by George Morse, Minnesota

Cooperative Extension Service, and Scott Loveridge, West Virginia University Cooperative Extension Service. Tom Ilvento, University of Delaware Cooperative Extension Service, assisted and conducted training sessions. Support for the development of the materials was provided by the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development. *(NERCRD)*

Using a Business R&E program developed with support of the Western Rural Development Center, New Mexico State University Extension has assisted seven communities in expanding their economic base by saving and creating local jobs. Seven jobs were saved in Silver City when task force members facilitated a propane company's move to a new location. The Clovis task force intervened with city officials to save a $1 million business complex. The R&E staff in Torrance County created 75 jobs by helping a commercial greenhouse find suitable land. BC Hydro in Burnaby, British Columbia recently requested and received permission to adapt the Business R&E program materials for use in rural Canada. *(WRDC)*

Community-based Food Processing Strategies in the Northeast

A Cornell University extension specialist is developing detailed case studies of four community-based food processing incubators. Two case studies have been conducted to date, one in Ohio and the other in West Virginia. The case studies represent two very different food processing incubator programs and are providing valuable insights into the operations of food processing incubators. One involves a centralized facility, and the other a decentralized network of small existing kitchens. The specialist will also participate in training Northeast Extension staff on community-based food processing strategies at the Pennsylvania Association of Sustainable Agriculture's Annual Farming for the Future Conference, scheduled for February 6, 1998. A publication on Value-Adding and Sustainable Agriculture will be produced and available this summer. Included in the handbook will be community-based strategies for supporting small-scale food processing. *(NERCRD)*

Designing Economically Sustainable Self-help Institutions

Project investigators have studied the unique attributes of a new organizational form termed "new generation cooperatives." A number of these new organizations are in the livestock sector. Closed value-added swine cooperatives appear to be a viable alternative for Iowa grain producers as a means for adding value to grain production. Analysis of four swine production systems indicated that cumulative performance over a five-year period

(including start-up periods) resulted in positive cash flow and net income. This was true under three different financial leverage positions. Several conclusions can be drawn from these results which may be useful to groups who are considering forming cooperatives. A copy of the complete paper can be found at http://www.econ.iastate.edu/faculty/ginder/publications/closed_coop.htm. *(NCRCRD)*

Determining Creditworthiness of Agricultural and Small Business Borrowers in Ohio

The agricultural crisis of the 1980s had a significant impact on credit evaluation procedures. Add to this the increased competitiveness for capital, and lenders are looking for effective methods to deal with these changes. A strategy some lenders have adopted is a more formalized credit evaluation process. This has enhanced the lender's ability to make a more objective decision about loans, their pricing, and review of existing loans.

Funded in part by a grant from the NCRCRD, the Ohio Rural Development Partnership conducted a study on Determining Creditworthiness of Agricultural and Small Business Borrowers in Ohio. This research looked at the current lending environment for agricultural and rural business loans in rural Ohio. Some perceive that there is insufficient capital available for agricultural and rural businesses. There are as many that feel there is adequate funding, but insufficient applicant preparation in order to gain funds. This survey examined the requirements and procedures of lenders in an attempt to identify possible educational programs that could help eliminate the difference in perceptions. Cooperative development of an educational program series on business planning, credit scoring, and financial record keeping could help meet the needs of both lenders and applicants. *(NCRCRD)*

Extending the Capacity for Value-added Agriculture: Four State Training and Regional Resource Team Initiative

Last March, 115 people from four states convened for two and one-half days of intense training and planning sessions, and to pool information and share resources about value-added agriculture. Supported by the WRDC, the Farm Foundation and Cooperative Extension in Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and Utah, the symposium is part of the Extension initiative, Communities in Economic Transition. This year's meeting built on the success of a similar conference held in 1996. The hefty resource packet created for the 1997 meeting has generated a great deal of interest across the country. *(WRDC)*

Home-Based and Micro Business Education Curriculum

Ca$hing in on Business Opportunities: A Guide to Building a Home-Based/Micro Business Program is a soon-to-be-released Extension curriculum for educators who work with home-based and micro businesses. The comprehensive curriculum was developed by the Home-Based and Micro Business National Design Team of the Communities in Economic Transition National Initiative. The director of SRDC serves on the design team. Beth Duncan, Mississippi State University, was co-chair of the design team. The SRDC editor was developmental editor of this project. The curriculum will be published later this year through the Southern Rural Development Center and Mississippi State University Extension Service. Extension training will be available beginning April 1998. *(SRDC)*

Home-based Business

Ten years ago the WRDC sponsored a week-long training for Extension personnel called Getting Down to Business. That training has spawned countless progeny, including a home-based business program in southeastern Idaho that has reached more than 1,500 adults over the past eight years. For the past five years, in collaboration with Eastern Idaho Technical College, the Idaho State University Cooperative Extension in Idaho Falls has organized an entrepreneurship conference for high school students. Last year a teacher track was added with excellent reviews. This spring marks the second venture for the partners into distance learning with a two-part workshop that will be downlinked to at least seven sites in the region. Last year's maiden voyage attracted 45 participants to four, three-hour sessions on Saturday mornings. These are the first non-credit courses in the state to be offered to adults via teleconference. *(WRDC)*

Immigration and the Changing Face of Rural America

The face of rural America is changing, in part because of immigration from Latin America and Asia. This issue was addressed at a conference titled *Immigration and the Changing Face of Rural America: Focus on the Midwestern States.* The meatpacking industry in the Midwest is a major attraction to immigrants, offering year-round jobs with annual earnings high enough to support a family. The issues associated with the arrival of families rather than solo males—such as housing, schooling and health care—become important community issues early in the migration process. The NCRCRD co-sponsored this conference with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Giannini Foundation, the Urban Institute, and the University of California-Davis. *(NCRCRD)*

Manufacturing Success in the Nonmetropolitan Northeast

The overriding challenge for rural development continues to be finding ways to generate employment opportunities in the face of forces that make this a daunting task. The nature of the rural economy has changed sufficiently that the principal cause of economic stress in much of nonmetropolitan America has been attributed to the poor performance of rural manufacturing. This "manufacturing problem" has been particularly evident in the Rust Belt states of the Mid-Atlantic and New England regions. Nevertheless, a set of nonmetro counties in the Northeast region remained specialized in manufacturing from 1950 to 1990, and another set showed sizable manufacturing employment growth during the 1980s.

This study examined in depth three sets of Northeast nonmetropolitan counties that: 1) maintained a manufacturing concentration (23 counties), 2) increased manufacturing employment (35 counties), and 3) did not maintain a manufacturing employment base (34 counties). The overall objective was to determine reasons for relative success in maintaining manufacturing employment in the region that apparently is the least favorable location for manufacturing. The study was conducted at two complementary levels. The first used county-level secondary economic, social and spatial data to examine characteristics that are different among the sets of counties.

The second level employed mail surveys of 563 local development and government officials to determine if a relationship exists between the economic development actions employed in the different sets of counties and their relative success in maintaining manufacturing employment. The results of the study will provide information that will help policy makers to more effectively and efficiently use scarce development resources. *(NERCRD)*

Measuring the Success of Economic Development Tools

The purpose of this project is to measure the success of economic development tools used by local governments. Based on previous research conducted in Illinois and Wisconsin, the project leaders will identify and select economic development tools that are being used in rural communities. Survey data will be collected from establishments, employees and community leaders in Illinois and Wisconsin. An extensive benefit-cost analysis will be developed for each tool being studied, and the performance of traditional programs in comparison with "new wave" tools will be evaluated. The information from community leaders will be used to iden-

tify innovative strategies or "best practices" for communities to better manage economic development programs. The results will be used to develop educational materials for communities that can be used as guidelines for the use of economic development tools to enhance growth and overall quality of life in rural communities. *(NCRCRD)*

Microenterprise Development Training Program for Rural Women

The Kansas Center for Rural Initiatives is coordinating a Microenterprise Development Training Program for Rural Women, funded by a state planning grant from the Kansas Economic Development Administration. Funds from the NCRCRD are being used to conduct an evaluation of the Kansas sites and other programs in the Midwest. Demographic information has been obtained from participants in a training held during Spring 1997. In addition, participants were asked to provide information about their business goals, their financial needs, and what they perceive to be barriers to success. KCRI evaluations will focus on the following questions: 1) How do women in microenterprise programs define success? 2) What type of environment at the local level leads to microenterprise development? 3) What is the role of the state in the field of microenterprise development? What programs and policies encourage or discourage microentrepreneurship? How do states differ in these programs? *(NCRCRD)*

National Small Stores Institute

The first NSSI "Skills Enhancement Workshop" will be held in St. Louis in March 1998 for retailing support practitioners and professionals. The National Small Stores Institute team (formerly Rural Retail) has been established as part of the USDA Communities in Economic Transition program. The mission of NSSI is to strengthen, through educational processes, the knowledge, perspectives, and skills of field professionals who provide assistance to people who own and operate small retail businesses across the United States. A national team of educators from land-grant universities, a Federal Reserve Bank, Small Business Development Centers, and the private sector are working together to focus on retail trade development education. The Regional Rural Development Centers are involved with this program as well. *(NCRCRD, NERCRD, SRDC, WRDC)*

Natural Resources Income Opportunities for Private Land Owners Conference

The Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development is providing support to the "Natural Resources Income Opportunities for Private Land

Owners" conference scheduled for April 5-7, 1998, in Hagerstown, Maryland. It will focus on legal aspects, marketing plans, enterprise diversity, and entrepreneurial development topics. *(NERCRD)*

New Value-added Co-op Law Helps Community Avert Plant Closure

At first, the news out of West Liberty, Iowa (population 3,000) was all too common. The West Liberty Louis Rich turkey processing facility announced it was downsizing its operation, eliminating nearly one-half of the production positions and terminating 433 employees from both management and hourly personnel. Next it was announced the plant would close if a buyer was not found. Then things changed and became anything but standardized. To keep the plant and their own grower operations from shutting down, 45 turkey growers formed a cooperative to purchase the plant, becoming the first cooperative to operate under a 1996 Iowa law that permits growers and other commodity producers to own and operate processing facilities in a closed cooperative. According to the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives, a closed cooperative is designed for special purpose groups and must have a minimum of 60 percent farmer controlled equity. Members are invited to join, which may involve a substantial financial commitment, and in return are provided the benefit of delivery rights for a certain volume of a commodity. *(NCRCRD)*

North Central Region Extension Tourism Workshop

Six states in the North Central region participated in a regional Extension tourism workshop held May 14-16, 1997 in Duluth, Minnesota. The workshop featured 11 topical breakout sessions. Each session was coordinated by an educator with experience in the subject area, and participants were encouraged to share information, ideas and current developments from their own research, programming and regions. The workshop also included two general sessions addressing current developments in Extension tourism education, and training programs for Extension faculty. *(NCRCRD)*

Portfolio-Based Development Policy Alternatives for the New England Economy

Researchers from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst are studying the role that rural industries might play in the development of a portfolio for the New England economy. This study will assess how limited public

funds should be allocated to provide maximum benefits. In particular, it will focus on the development of rural industries and the timing of economic cycles in rural and non-rural industries. Results of this project should be useful to policy officials and lenders in New England. Rural industries may benefit if credit obstacles are reduced through the availability of objective, scholarly information on rural industry trends and contributions to general economic stability. Basic data and information on rural industries in New England have been collected from a number of sources. A framework for the documentary report has been identified and statistical analysis of data is underway. Once developed, this model will be used to assess the impact and potential impact of rural industries on regional economic stability. The portfolio analysis will be highlighted in the documentary report. *(NERCRD)*

Promoting Capital Planning in Northeast Rural Governments

A Penn State Cooperative Extension Specialist and a Cornell University researcher and extension specialist worked with local government officials and commissioners to enhance the knowledge and capacity of cooperative extension personnel and other assistance providers to help rural governments in New York and Pennsylvania implement a multi-year fiscal financial planning system with *Capital Plus* software. Two workshops were conducted during the summer of 1997. Forty-six participants attended the workshops: 13 two-member teams of local government assistance providers and rural officials from communities in New York and Pennsylvania, and representatives from four other Northeast states.

Pennsylvania and New York teams have begun implementing this system and are committed to working with a cluster of nearby local governments to implement capital planning. The representatives from the other Northeast states expressed interest in exploring whether the *Capital Plus* approach could be modified at reasonable cost for use in their states. A special follow-up session was conducted with each of the state representatives. Project staff discussed interest in follow-up and developed a plan of action for each state attending. Project leaders from the New York team have agreed to work with leaders in Maryland, New Hampshire and West Virginia. The packet of training notes and materials from those workshops have been adapted into a training manual titled *Capital Planning Training Materials: Prepared to Help Rural Governments Develop Capital Plans Using Capital Plus Software.* The Appalachian Regional Commission and the U.S. Economic Development Administration provided additional support for this project. *(NERCRD)*

Rural Education and the Information Highway: Making Connections, Building Community

Access to the information highway can bring considerable benefits to rural schools and communities, yet most continue to struggle with a lack of funding and basic infrastructure. To help rural communities get online, Organizations Concerned about Rural Education teamed up with PBS to offer a live, interactive satellite teleconference that: analyzed the needs of rural schools, including access, basic equipment, essential infrastructure, and training; recommended strategies for mobilizing resources to fulfill these needs; explained the recent federal law guaranteeing K-12 schools and libraries significant discounts for connectivity costs; examined case studies of successful technology models in rural schools and communities; and initiated interactive conversations among educators, government officials, and business and community leaders on how to revitalize rural schools and communities. With assistance from Tom Tate at CSREES/USDA, the NCRCRD worked with PBS to obtain a group discount for the North Central region. Twenty-three sites coordinated through Extension and state Rural Development offices were able to access the teleconference for a reduced license fee. *(NCRCRD)*

Rural Tourism

The 1996 revised edition of the *Community Tourism Assessment Handbook* has been formatted for the Worldwide Web and is currently being translated for the Western Rural Development Center web page [http://www.orst.edu/Dept/WRDC/]. A printed copy of the manual is also available from the WRDC and has generated a great deal of interest in and use of the program.

White Pine County, Nevada, produced a special four-color visitors' map to promote local tourism following an assessment that the chamber of commerce conducted using the WRDC program. Implementing the WRDC tourism assessment program, community leaders in the Globe-Miami region of southeastern Arizona developed a concept that focused on old west history to attract visitors. Surveys indicate that revenue from the bed tax has increased 53 percent; restaurant income went up 15 percent; the Center for the Arts saw a 23 percent rise in sales; and the archeological park entertained 102 percent more visitors. Six communities in Montana are involved in tourism development based on the results of the assessment project, including Choteau, which served as one of the pilot communitics in 1992.

The tourism assessment project arose from and has been nurtured for the last five or six years by the Western Extension CRD Committee supported by the Farm Foundation. While tourism is probably inevitable and to a degree even desirable, the results of the assessment program drive home the need for management to minimize negative impacts. *(WRDC)*

Southern Regional Consortium to Address Food Processing Industry Competitiveness

The Southern Rural Development Center funded an effort to link the land grant system of the 13-state Southern region into an alliance to address food processing technology issues, technical assistance resources, and collaborative opportunities. The project was conducted by a design team of Extension and research representatives from across the land grant system in the South. The consortium produced a directory, SRDC Publication #205, of the resources available to support the food processing industry in the region. The directory provides a concise listing of persons and their specific expertise, facilities and equipment, and other related resources such as publications, newsletters, fact sheets and videos. Joe McGilberry, Mississippi State University, served as chair of the regional design team. *(SRDC)*

Statewide Strategic Plan for Rural Development

Rural Partners, the Illinois private/public partnership for rural community development, is involved in the development of a statewide strategic plan for rural development. Ten key players in Illinois came together and designed a unique format through which state and federal strategic planning has been coupled with local input on rural needs gathered from throughout the state. The unique quality of this process is that local input was gathered at the beginning of the developmental process, not as a response to a completed document. Eight community meetings were held during June and July for the purpose of gathering grassroots input into the planning document. An intern helped to organize and implement the meetings, and afterwards helped to organize the 600 plus recommendations for inclusion in the new planning document. NCRCRD funding was used to pay for the intern, a Peace Corps returnee with a master's degree in education. *(NCRCRD)*

Workshop Highlights Rural Telecommunications Activities

Over the last 10 years, telecommunications technologies that were once only future visions for rural communities are now readily available and useful tools. As a number of communities have either succeeded or failed in their efforts to adopt and use these technologies, lessons have been learned that can help facilitate future community efforts, inform policy makers and telecommunications providers, and raise questions that require additional research. Representatives from eight communities in the North Central region shared the lessons they have learned with more than 100 participants at a workshop held in Kansas City on February 25-27, 1997. Titled Telecommunications for Rural Community Viability: Making Wise Choices, this workshop enabled community development practitioners, state policy makers, telecommunications providers and rural development scholars to assess the problems and opportunities created by these technologies, and the optimum forms of state and community policies and programs that lead to their productive use. The community presentations made clear that access to telecommunications technology is no longer the issue, but rather how to use the technology effectively. *(NCRCRD)*

2. Linking Natural Resource Industries, Including Agriculture, with Community and Environmental Resources

One of the unique aspects of rural communities is their natural resource base. Rural areas are the stewards of the nation's soil, water, and biodiversity. Ninety-seven per cent of the land area in the U.S. is rural. As population increases, more is expected from rural areas in terms of environmental services. Strengthening the ability of rural communities to respond to changing and complex demands on local resources is a priority for the Regional Rural Development Centers.

Conducting an Effective Waste Pesticide Disposal Program

Mississippi State University Extension Service, along with the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce and other related agencies, planned this program in early 1994 to address the problem of waste agricultural pesticides and their containers. The goal was to reduce the amount of waste pesticides on farms and determine if such a program would be feasible in different areas of the state and in other states. The program collected 23,000 pounds one day; five follow-up programs collected 257,000 pounds of waste farm pesticides for disposal by a licensed contractor. That success led to SRDC funding the development of a publication describing how to conduct similar programs in other areas. The publication will be for regional dissemination. A video will be developed at a later date. Jimmy Bonner, project coordinator at Mississippi State University, was principal investigator of this pilot project. *(SRDC)*

The Consortium to Promote the Social and Economic Acceptability of Conservation Buffers

The NCRCRD is involved in a Fund for Rural America planning grant for The Consortium to Promote the Social and Economic Acceptability of Conservation Buffers, along with the USDA Forest Service/National Resource Conservation Service National Agroforestry Center; and the Center for Sustainable Agricultural Systems, University of Nebraska, Lincoln. This project focuses on the North Central region where non-point pollution of major waterways is felt to be extremely high. Yet the implications are broad and will be linked to other regions. The Consortium will

develop community-based prototypes of institutionalizing conservation buffers as part of larger conservation programs. Curriculum will be developed, partnerships built, prototypes studied in terms of their impact on conservation, farmer and community goals, and this information shared with the partners at the local level. At the end of the period, there should not only be more miles of conservation buffers, but buffers that are supported by a wide range of state, local, and federal partners tied together on a landscape base, developed by teams willing to share their experience with others, in other parts of the region and other parts of the country. *(NCRCRD)*

Contemporary Iowa and Nebraska Farm Women and Rural Activism

During the Farm Crisis, many rural women became active in the farm and rural advocacy movement, often becoming leaders in efforts to change national government policy. In the last five to 10 years, however, activism has lessened considerably although the need has not. To determine what factors affect farm women's rural and farm advocacy involvement, interviews were conducted with 27 rural women from Iowa and Nebraska who had been involved in farm or rural advocacy activities from 1979 to 1987. The level of involvement was determined by several cooperating organizations, including the Nebraska and Iowa Farmers Unions, PrairieFire Rural Action, the Center for Rural Affairs, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, the Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society, the Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, and the National Family Farm Coalition.

Eight recommendations to farm and rural advocacy organizations arose from the data: 1) be aware of the range and requirements of women's roles and responsibilities, including home, farm and off-farm duties; 2) educate husbands about the need for their support, both concrete and emotional; 3) openly value women's contributions and put them in positions of power in rural organizations; 4) make meetings fun, educational and efficient (lasting from 45 to 90 minutes); 5) have a local presence and consider local issues; 6) work on issues women find interesting and on which they feel they can make an impact; 7) develop projects to which women can contribute; and 8) consider hiring local rural women for staff positions in farm and rural organizations.

By following these recommendations, farm and rural advocacy organizations may find that rural women would be easier to recruit and sustain as active local change agents, something that rural communities need now more than ever as they face the challenges before them. *(NCRCRD)*

The Effectiveness of Local, Consensus-based Efforts in Influencing Rural Land Use Policy: An Assessment of Watershed Planning Collaborations in Idaho, Oregon and Washington

A Washington State University film crew has videotaped footage from watershed sites in Idaho and Washington that document the effectiveness of techniques employed within watersheds by grassroots organizations. Once additional funds are secured, sites in Oregon will be filmed and videotape will be produced and distributed. *(WRDC)*

Food: A Link Between Welfare and Work

The focus on agriculture and food is often global in nature and centered on agricultural commodities. At the same time, consumers are showing higher degrees of interest in local food products exhibited by the extensive number of farmers' markets and other direct marketing outlets that have been set up in recent years. These evolving food systems are innovative and exciting, but they have been criticized for their orientation toward the middle-class and professionals. The same national and transnational conditions that are forcing changes in our food system are driving radical change in our national welfare programs. This situation provides an opportunity for the agricultural community to step forward and be a part of the solution by encouraging a new group of farmers who can produce for rapidly expanding markets in urban areas. The challenge is to help some of those moving from public assistance into a viable job opportunity in raising food while providing the urban poor with desperately needed produce. The vision is to bring together the available resources at the local, county and state levels to create opportunities for "new" farmers. *(NCRCRD)*

An Integrated Solution to Marginal Land Farming: Use of Farms, Value-added Industries and Power Utilities for Rural Development

The Northern Indiana Public Service Company has been working with a team of scientists at Purdue University to examine the role of biomass as an alternative fuel in their energy production. Their use of biomass would provide several environmental benefits, as well as economic benefits for rural communities that surround their power plants. A test burn was completed in late 1997 using biomass derived from waste woods of municipal, industrial and construction origin. They continue to look at dedicated energy crops as an additional source to come from farms. *(NCRCRD)*

Interstate Water Allocation Economics and Incentive-Based Approaches to Environmental Regulatory Reform

Public policies regarding the use and distribution of natural resources and the environment continue to occupy a significant amount of the national resource economist's time. This proceedings contains selected papers from two workshops sponsored by the Southern Regional Information Exchange Group-10 in 1995 and 1996 that addressed two areas of particular interest. The 1995 workshop, "Interstate Water Allocation Economics," discussed three aspects of interstate water allocation: water allocation institutions, state water law and regulatory issues, and basin-wide water management models. In 1996 a second workshop, "Incentive-Based Approaches to Environmental Regulatory Reform," provided a synopsis of various approaches used to establish price signals or to foster markets for environmental protection activities; discussed some emerging wetlands mitigation innovations; and commented on efforts to support states' use of enforcement flexibility to provide compliance incentives for small communities. Lynn Reinschmiedt, Mississippi State University, and Upton Hatch, Auburn University, served as co-editors of these proceedings, SRDC #206. *(SRDC)*

Missouri River Corridor Program

The Missouri River Corridor Program is a grassroots, locally-led effort to protect and enhance the natural, cultural, recreational and economic resources along the Missouri River. The program is currently managed by a private, local, state and federal partnership called the Missouri River Corridor Action Team. With technical and financial assistance from the Western Governors' Association Great Plains Partnership and the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, a basin-wide local leaders meeting was held in September 1997 in South Sioux City, Nebraska, to discuss the possibility of developing a basin-wide corridor network. This meeting was attended by six of the seven Missouri River states and four of the 10 Tribes. It was the overwhelming consensus of the participants to form the network, now called the Missouri River Corridor Alliance. They are also looking at creating a separate nonprofit organization to oversee the work of the MRCAT. *(NCRCRD)*

Post-Industrial Rural Development: The Role of Natural Resources and the Environment

The Rural Economy Division of USDA's Economic Research Service and the NCRCRD have published the proceedings from a rural development workshop they co-sponsored, titled *Post-Industrial Rural Development:*

The Role of Natural Resources and the Environment. The workshop brought together 47 government and nongovernment experts from the biological, physical and social sciences to identify and discuss the principal issues, barriers and opportunities related to natural resource use and environmental protection in the United States. The workshop generated numerous topics for discussion and areas for new research, but also highlighted the growing complexity of natural resource decisions facing America and many other regions of the world. *(NCRCRD)*

Productivity and Conservation: Working Toward Common Goals

The NCRCRD, in collaboration with the Farm Foundation, has worked with the Riley Memorial Foundation in examining ways that the land-grant system can work more closely with federal and state agencies to increase productivity and conservation. Staff attended meetings in the North Central and Western regions. Results of the four regional workshops, plus a national response from key federal agencies, were presented in Washington, D.C. on December 10. NCRCRD director and John Lee, Mississippi State University, presented a summary of the lessons learned gleaned from the workshops. *(NCRCRD)*

Recycling Waste Paper, Wood Residues and Coal Fines as Fuel Pellets for Home Heating

This study looked at the economic feasibility of creating small business opportunities within rural communities to produce fuel pellets from materials such as wood processing residue, waste paper and coal fines, and to market the pellets as a home heating fuel for pellet stoves. In order to determine the market potential for pelletized fuel systems, surveys of various consumer groups in Southern Illinois were conducted in 1996. Responses provided a basis for comparison of the general population and wood stove users, an analysis of attitudes toward alternative heating systems, information on factors which would make an alternative system attractive to respondents, demographics of respondents, and characteristics of industrial/institutional user groups. A general conclusion is that there is at present a lack of knowledge concerning pelletized fuels in this geographic area. A second general conclusion concerns cost. For both potential residential and industrial/institutional users, the cost of an alternative fuel outweighed other factors such as efficiency of the system or a system which was less polluting. It appears that the potential exists for a facility that could make fuel pellets out of residue or recycled material. It further appears that this potential may be greater for use in industrial/institutional settings rather than residential. *(NCRCRD)*

Slow Food: Sustainable Agriculture and Responsible Eating

Slow Food: Sustainable Agriculture and Responsible Eating is a 30-minute videotape designed to provoke discussion of rural quality of life issues involved in sustainable agriculture and agribusiness. The video is made from conversations held with farmers in four Midwestern states who practice or advocate a new kind of farming—one that supports rural communities and safeguards the health and well-being of people and the environment. They call it sustainable agriculture. However, many of the farmers that were interviewed told the researchers that the sustainable agriculture movement would not succeed unless and until urban eaters joined farmers in the movement. The videotape is therefore geared to urban eaters and has been distributed in Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota and Wisconsin. *(NCRCRD)*

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education

The Southern Rural Development Center coordinated regional telephone discussions regarding the possibilities of submitting a proposal to the Southern Region SARE program. The following participated in the discussions: Owusu Bandele, Southern University; Magid Dagher, Alcorn State University; Bert English, University of Tennessee; Lee Meyer, University of Kentucky; Mickie Swisher, University of Florida; Jack Thigpen, Texas A&M University; and Don Voth, University of Arkansas. While the meetings were beneficial in different ways to the participants, they decided against submitting a proposal for a multistate project. *(SRDC)*

What Works? Water and Environmental Programming

The Southern Rural Development Center provided publicity and material preparation support for this regional conference attended by more than 225 persons. Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service was the lead facilitator, and an SRDC representative was on the planning committee. Farm Foundation provided $5,000 for follow-up activities that focused on lessons learned at the county level. CSREES contributed $10,000 to support the conference. The Center managed the financial process. *(SRDC)*

3. Increasing Community Capacity to Deal with Change

Rapid change in the global context in combination with more responsibility placed on rural areas means that communities must constantly improve their ability to identify and invest resources-human, financial, physical, and social. The Regional Rural Development Centers offer programs in leadership and strategic planning and support research on building and measuring social capital.

Center for Rural Community Development: Using Technology Tools for Development

The NCRCRD is involved with a Fund for Rural America planning grant submitted by the Laboratory for Community and Economic Development at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, UIUC; and the National Center for Supercomputing Applications, UIUC. The focus of the Center, titled the Center for Rural Community Development, will be on the use of information and communications technologies to enhance the abilities of communities to create and use knowledge productively and to expand knowledge access and exchange beyond traditional boundaries of time and place. The Center will enhance rural community development by using new technologies to: bring together communities of interest; help rural citizens and leaders, working with development professionals, set priorities; use the Internet to provide innovative educational programs; provide learning opportunities; and revise the format of the information exchange and make adaptations to educational programs. *(NCRCRD)*

Community Policy Analysis National Network

A national network of economists and sociologists are building the capacity to address issues of local communities and neighborhoods. Issues addressed pertain to local labor forces and to the local impacts of significant changes in local government revenues and costs. The WRDC supported travel to Reno for faculty from five Western states, where they worked for two days with national leaders of the program. This program has the capability to provide communities with information about where people live, where they work, how income and expenditure flow within the community, patterns of transportation and communication, the stock of housing and its location, and availability of both public and private services. *(WRDC)*

Comparing the Impacts of Growth Communities on Bedroom Communities across State Lines

Preliminary economic impact models have been developed to assess the interstate economic and fiscal impacts of rural communities that are located along state borders. These communities are reliant on each other for providing goods and services to the public. How one community affects another community in a different state becomes an important economic and fiscal question. Presentations made in several communities using the preliminary models were to test results and gather information from residents. Reports on socioeconomic trends and economic indicators are in draft form. *(WRDC)*

Distance Learning in Extension Programming

A Rutgers University Cooperative Extension Specialist is studying ways distance learning/education can be used to conduct learner-centered educational programming. The overall goal of the project is to begin to design, integrate and implement subject specific distance learning experiences for Extension clientele in New Jersey. This information will be shared with Extension educators throughout the Northeast region and beyond. *(NERCRD)*

Environmental School Enrichment

This project will pilot environmental teacher/leader kits in Centre County elementary schools. It will enhance the traditional 4-H programs "At Your Disposal," "Adopt A Tree" and "Endangered Species" by integrating a variety of active learning experiences for students and curriculum guides to help teachers understand and provide instruction in environmental education. These materials will help teachers and leaders expand and develop environmental concepts that promote awareness of finite natural resources, the need for conservation and stewardship of the environment. *(NERCRD)*

Extension Publications Focusing on Sustaining Rural Landscapes: The Critical Link Between Environment and Community

This project explored how links between environment and community can be strengthened to sustain the rural landscape in the urbanizing fringe. The objective was to explore innovative concepts that could be applied to

practical work of landscape protection and land use planning. Our thesis is that sustainability of communities and natural landscapes is enhanced by policies and behaviors that purposively strengthen community social ties, and recognize and respond to biophysical constraints.

Two extension-oriented publications have been produced for distribution in the Northeast and beyond. *Sustaining the Rural Landscape by Building Community Social Capital* describes organizing strategies used by Cooperative Extension agents in the urban fringe to link agricultural, environmental and economic development interests to preserve agricultural land as open space. *Agricultural and Farm Land Protection Boards: Linking Agricultural and Broader Community Interests* describes a new policy tool for rural landscape preservation which is voluntary, effective, and brings together broader community coalitions in support of rural landscape preservation. The publications are available through the Community Development Reports series of the Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI) of Cornell University, or may be located at their web site: http://www.cals.cornell.edu/dept/cardi/. *(NERCRD)*

Government Performance and Results Act

At the request of a regional GPRA task force, the SRDC coordinated a regional training meeting in Memphis, Tennessee, with more than 125 participants. All out of pocket expenses were reimbursed plus financial support for time and travel of Center staff. *(SRDC)*

Identifying Factors Leading to Effective Local Conservation Commissions

An applied research project is documenting successful and unsuccessful strategies used by conservation commissions in New Hampshire and Vermont to conserve natural resources and to integrate community needs into decision-making. Findings will enable extension and other education and service agencies to improve and expand their assistance to existing conservation commissions and to towns and cities considering establishing one. This research will assess the importance of conservation commissions as a local tool for natural resource conservation and citizen empowerment. It will document successful and unsuccessful strategies used by conservation commissions to protect local resources and integrate community needs into natural resource decision-making. Findings from this study will benefit conservation commissions in other Northeastern states by identifying factors that lead to success in local conservation action. Understanding the

educational, support, and resource needs of conservation commissions can contribute to renewed vitality for these important local institutions by improving the quality of Extension programming for conservation commissioners. *(NERCRD)*

Measuring Social Capital Indexes in Two Midwestern States and its Impact on Community Development

This project intends to determine the extent to which social capital influences economic and noneconomic aspects of rural development. An important economic aspect of rural development considered in this project is the level and disparity of household income in rural communities and rural counties. Noneconomic aspects of rural development considered in this project include family and community cohesion, respect for and participation in rural institutions, presence of bonded groups, provision of public services, and other measures of quality of life. The project will be conducted in three stages: 1) collect and analyze secondary data, 2) conduct onsite interviews and collect primary data using mail surveys in Illinois and Michigan, 3) integrate findings and analyze and compare the data collected and write rural development recommendations based on the study's findings. *(NCRCRD)*

National Rural Development Partnership

The Southern Rural Development Center continues dialogue with the executive directors of the State Rural Development Councils in the Southern region. In addition to attending their national meetings and convening regional sessions, Center staff is bringing the research community of the land grant system to bear on the activities of the Councils. The Center received funding from the Economic Research Service/USDA to support these efforts. As critical issues are identified, the Center will mobilize researchers to address these needs. *(SRDC)*

Public Issues Education and Collaborative Problem-Solving in the Northeast: Building Cooperative Extension's Capacity Through Partnerships

A state-level overview is being conducted of Cooperative Extension's involvement in public issues education in the Northeast. Related work in other organizations with dispute resolution activities or capacities also will

be identified. Intensive work is being carried out in New York and Pennsylvania, and contacts in Delaware and Maryland have expressed a strong interest in collaborating. The final phase of the project involves bringing together project participants, state-level collaborators, and other key contacts to evaluate project results and lessons learned, and to plan follow-up work. *(NERCRD)*

Role of Cooperatives

Travel and meeting expenses were provided to bring together researchers from Cornell University, Ohio State and Penn State to examine the emerging role of cooperatives in today's global economy. *(NERCRD)*

Rural Health Community Development Training Academy

A coalition of health, Extension and rural development organizations committed to rural community empowerment and local decision-making developed the nation's first rural health community development training academy in June 1996. The goals were to build state capacity to assist rural communities in redesigning, strengthening and networking their health care systems as part of community development efforts. Research demonstrates that both rural health system development and networking development can be enhanced by the systematic application of community development, organizational development and strategic planning skills and knowledge. This research also suggests that rural communities increase the likelihood of positive outcomes when they use outside technical resources skilled in health care planning and rural community development.

Seventeen individuals representing various government agencies, universities and private organizations with expertise in community health system development worked on the design of the training academy, curriculum development, site arrangements, resource faculty, and evaluation plan. Funding partners included Pharmacia and UpJohn Inc., USDA-CSREES Decisions for Health, National Rural Health Association, and HHS Bureau of Primary Care and Office of Rural Health Policy. The training academy was coordinated by the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development in cooperation with the other three RRDCs. State teams from Arkansas, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Washington and West Virginia participated.

The Mountain States Group Inc. of Boise, Idaho and the Minnesota Center for Rural Health in Duluth, Minnesota developed the curriculum and delivered the training along with other training consultants. State team members learned how to assist rural communities in building capacity in health-based community development and community team members learned skills for working with community partners to respond to and manage the changes taking place with rural health care systems. The Apostle Islands Group has provided off-site technical assistance to the state teams during the past year, and an intermediate evaluation has been completed of the curriculum, faculty, resource materials and knowledge gain. The evaluation report states that no Rural Health Community Development efforts have been executed in vain, although recommendations are made to create a more viable environment for future projects. Ken Martin, associate director of the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development, conducted the evaluation. *(NCRCRD)*

Rural Infrastructure as a Cause and Consequence of Rural Economic Development and Quality of Life

Declining rural communities, fewer jobs, limited access to information and services, and out-migration of youth have forced rural America to rethink its future. The 1997 session of the Southern Extension/Research Activities Information Exchange Group-16 focused on theory research and educational models pertaining to community sustainability. Educational and research models were presented defining sustainability along with overviews of selected efforts to foster community viability. RDC staff participates in Information Exchange Group meetings and publishes the proceedings. Joe Schmidt, Mississippi State University, served as editor of SRDC #207. *(SRDC)*

Skill Building for Stronger Communities

With the restructuring of government agencies and the decentralization of responsibility and programs, there is an increasing need for collaboration at the field level among USDA agencies involved in rural development. Eighty field staff representing three USDA agencies in the five Northern Great Plains states met in Moorhead, Minnesota, on September 23-25, 1997 for community capacity training. The purpose of the training was not only to build skills in community development, but also to identify issues of concern in each of the states (North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska) and obtain a commitment from the three diverse agencies to work together in addressing these concerns. The agencies

involved were Resource Conservation and Development Councils, USDA Rural Development and Cooperative Extension. The NCRCRD and the Heartland Center for Leadership Development sponsored the training, with funding support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. *(NCRCRD)*

Tennessee Valley Authority Project

The Southern Rural Development Center received $16,000 from the TVA Rural Studies Center for a project titled, "Human Capital Endowments and Labor Force Experiences of Urban-Rural Southerners: A Longitudinal Study." A graduate student is assisting in the study to examine the human capital resources of a cadre of Southerners who were part of a national panel study, "High School and Beyond." This study will offer specific information about the opportunities and obstacles experienced by Southerners advancing into the work force, and how their experiences might be shaped by the human resources they bring to the marketplace. The study will produce an article for academic audiences addressing the link between human resource attributes and labor market experiences of Southerners, a document for the public on the human capital endowments and labor force experiences of Southerners, etc. and providing public policy implications for the region. *(SRDC)*

Working Toward Community Goals: Helping Communities Succeed

The NCRCRD and its partners have developed a workbook to help communities learn how to measure the local or regional impacts of economic and community development processes that enhance rural community sustainability. The workbook provides guidance to communities who want to get a better idea of the possible ways to gather information that details progress toward community-established goals. At the same time, it helps them understand how local goals might be related to research-based outcomes that describe what vital rural communities look like. The process is anchored in research conducted through the Rural Community Assistance program of the USDA Forest Service. Several training sessions have been held throughout the United States. Partners include USDA Forest Service, the New Hampshire Rural Development Council, the Rocky Mountain Institute, the Heartland Center for Leadership Development, Yellow Wood Associates Inc., and The Aspen Institute. *(NCRCRD)*

4. Increasing Social Viability through Enhancing the Self-reliance of Families and Communities

Not only do rural economies need to be vital. The households and individuals in these communities need to increase their well-being. The Regional Rural Development Centers pioneered Pathways from Poverty, an extremely significant effort to identify the forces that create persistent poverty among rural people and, working with the people themselves, to find ways they can enrich their lives and their communities.

Consumer Credit Management Practices of Northeastern Residents

A researcher and extension specialist from Penn State teamed up with extension specialists from Delaware State University and the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore to assess the consumer credit knowledge of rural poor and ethnic minorities and determine their use and management practices. An educational program that focuses on the wise use of consumer credit was developed and offered to a diverse extension audience. In-service workshops also were offered to extension educators in several states in the Northeast. Two additional Northeastern states, New York and New Jersey, have duplicated the curriculum for distribution to all counties.

Additional outcomes include: 1.) A teacher guide/curriculum that can be used by educators to deliver programs on consumer credit. A copy of this guide has been sent to each state organization involved in this project: Delaware, Maryland and Pennsylvania. 2.) A set of 36 color transparencies that is appropriate for use with all audiences. They are sensitive to consumers' physical differences. 3.) Two additional Northeastern states, New York and New Jersey, have duplicated the curriculum for distribution to all counties. 4.) One of the cooperating agents was recognized at the 1996 National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences for a doctoral study that is a spin-off from this project. 5.) Additional impacts of the project are expected as articles are submitted for publication in professional periodicals and proposals are submitted for presentation at professional meetings. *(NERCRD)*

Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community Initiative

The EZ/EC Research Team continues the assessment of the USDA Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community Initiative. Four principles guide the EZ/EC Initiative: economic development, sustainable community development, community-based partnerships, and strategic visioning through widespread citizen participation. The research project has two thrusts: 1) locate and assemble over time "unobtrusive indicators" of economic development and elements of sustainable community development within the areas designated as persistently poor rural communities; and 2) interview local sources to gather qualitative and quantitative date on sustainable community development, community-based partnerships, and citizen participation during planning, and on governance structures during implementation.

Despite considerable methodological difficulties presented by the organization of the EZ/EC initiative, NCRCRD staff has developed several unobtrusive indicators and methods that capture changes over time. To meet a special request of the USDA Office of Community Development, the NCRCRD prepared and submitted a preliminary analysis of selected indicators for 18 of the 33 rural sites in early April 1997. The OCD staff asked for an analysis to assist OCD in presenting testimony to congressional inquiries as Congress considers a second wave of funding to expand the EZ/EC Initiative to more persistently poor rural communities. *(NCRCRD)*

Great Beginnings

An existing newsletter series that focuses on the critical years of childhood has been adapted and made accessible through a site on the world wide web. The *Great Beginnings* series can be accessed at http://bluehen.ags.udel.edu/deces/gb/. *(NERCRD)*

Ground Water Festival Enhancement for "Meet the Plant" and Future "Splash20" 4-H Workshops

The Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development contributed to the support of workshop materials for "The Children's Groundwater Festival," a festival that educates 6th graders about groundwater and the environment. The mini grant will help provide the following materials: 4-H project book *Meet The Plants,* Penn State; 4-H project book *Splash20,* Ohio State; information from the booklet *Impact of Disposing of Household Cleaning Products in Wastewater Treatment Systems,* North Carolina University; and *The Price is Water Game,* Ohio State. *(NERCRD)*

Land of New Promise Homestead Center

In President Clinton's second inaugural address, he spoke of the necessity of making a transition from America, the "new land of promise," to America, the "land of new promise." For no one is this transition more important than for those who are confronted with the challenges of welfare reform and the necessity of moving from welfare to work. Nowhere is this challenge to the economically and socially disadvantaged greater than in rural America. Development of the New Promise Homestead Center represents a unique, innovative, high-impact research, education and extension program to aid farmers and rural communities during this time of transition.

The purpose of the Center is to promote economic opportunity and clearly addresses the intersection of environmental stewardship, rural community enhancement, and agricultural profitability issues. It is designed to meet research, education and extension needs of New Promise Homestead Communities that obviously cannot be met by separate efforts. It will promote collaboration, open communication, exchange of information and resources, and integration of activities among individuals, institutions, states or regions by focusing on support of the New Promise Community concept. The Center will minimize isolation and over-competitiveness; reduce duplication of effort; enhance multidisciplinary, multifunctional, multi-institutional and other collaborative efforts; and provide an accessible source of expert information, technology and education.

The Homestead Act of 1862 promised new land to people who were willing to build a home, clear the land, and make "the land" productive. The New Promise Homestead program offers land with new promise to those who are willing to build a home, work the land, and make "themselves" productive. *(NCRCRD)*

Life Skills Training Program

A Life Skills Training program for youth was researched, developed and piloted in several communities in New York and Pennsylvania. This preventive program informs teens and youth of the dangers of drugs and alcohol usage, and it offers them the skills needed to resist risky behaviors. The program relies on a tiered mentoring system of adults to teens and teens to youth. The program is offered to youth at a crucial time when pressures have the most influence on them, the age of fifth- and sixth-graders. The teens enabled the children to see what problems they will face

in high school and how to properly handle those tough situations. The Life Skills Training program proved that teens make very positive role models and are very likely to have a great influence on children. Not only did the program offer positive reinforcement for the younger children, but for the teens as well. Through teaching, teens learned more about drugs and alcohol and also about life skills such as improving assertiveness. Not only did relationships develop between children and teens, but between adults and teens as well. Through the relationship they developed with their role models, the children also learned that high school offers many options other than drugs, like clubs and sports. The children were able to leave the program with positive attitudes about their ability to say no to drugs and alcohol and a positive outlook toward high school and the future. It made them more aware of their surroundings and what they'll encounter in later years. *(NERCRD)*

Linking Family and Community Strengths Evaluation Follow-up

The SRDC, W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Farm Foundation funded 12 mini-grants as a result of the 1996 conference "Linking Family and Community Strengths." Six months after the SRDC-sponsored conference all those attending the meeting received an evaluation form. While an at-conference evaluation was completed, the planning committee also wanted to document post-conference changes. As an example of the knowledge gained from the conference, one-third of those responding to the questionnaire have conducted an in-service training in their state borrowing conference materials and ideas. The "Linking" grants funded several Cooperative Extension Service educators' initial attempts to partner with colleagues in other areas of specialization and with outside organizations and agencies. Case examples coming from the 12 grants provide the basis for a document, ***Evaluation and Impacts of Linking Family and Community Strengths Conference. (SRDC)***

Marketing Enhanced Financial Well-Being: The MONEY 2000 Video

The objective of MONEY 2000 is to encourage participants to save and/or reduce debt by $2,000 by the end of the year 2000. The 6.5 minute long video describes the logistics of the MONEY 2000 program, with the second half featuring soundbites from "real people" who describe specific ways to increase savings and reduce household expenses and debt. *Money 2000: Start Today* is helping to promote enrollment in the MONEY 2000 program. As of February 1, 1997, 842 New Jersey households have enrolled and reported aggregate savings and debt reduction exceeding

$150,000. The video was distributed widely to extension personnel in the region and the nation, and to financial counselors at several military bases. *(NERCRD)*

Measuring the Economic Importance of the Health Sector on a Local Economy: A Brief Literature Review and Procedures To Measure Local Impacts

The Southern Rural Development Center funded a study by three Extension economists to measure the economic importance of the health sector and also to develop procedures to measure the impact. A literature review resulted in the conclusion that direct and secondary impacts on community employment and income often account for 15 to 20 percent of the total community's employment and income. In addition, the review strongly supported the conclusion that a viable health sector is not only important for jobs, but is important if a community wants to attract industry, business or retirees. Economists Gerald Doeksen and Chuck Willoughby, Oklahoma State University, and Tom Johnson, Virginia Tech, conducted the study. A report of the study, with accompanying disk containing an Excel spreadsheet program, was published by and is available from the SRDC (#202). *(SRDC)*

Minnesota Pathways from Poverty

In response to the Information Liaison Opportunity available through the Economic Research Service and the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, Minnesota Rural Partners, the state's rural development council, has received funds to support their Pathways from Poverty efforts. These funds will be used to hire an individual to coordinate activities of the state team, support the development of the Pathways community decision process, coordinate the development of pilot projects in Wadena County and Marshall, and continue to support the pursuit of funding for the Pathways from Poverty project. *(NCRCRD)*

National Rural Studies Committee

The National Rural Studies Committee final report was produced at the Western Rural Development Center in July 1997 as the Committee was replaced by a Council that will be located at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. The Council plans to continue the work begun by the Committee supporting development of a cadre of scholars working on rural issues. The

W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the four Regional Rural Development Centers have supported the Committee's work during the past 10 years. *(WRDC, NCRCRD, NERCRD, SRDC)*

Pathways

Nine state teams from the North Central region met in Chicago on October 24-26, 1997 for a second Pathways from Poverty meeting. The North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, with funds from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, hosted this meeting so that the teams, which are at different stages of action, could share success stories and challenges and receive training in coalition building. The state teams had identified this type of training as a high priority to help them move forward in their effort to increase rural household self-sufficiency in a community context. Representing the National Network for Collaboration, the training in coalition building was provided by Jeff Miller, North Dakota State University Extension, and Joanne Keith, Michigan State University Extension. Cornelia Flora, director of the NCRCRD, spoke on the importance of collaborations in the context of devolution, and breakout sessions were included for state teams to learn from one another and plan for future activities. Julie Zimmerman, coordinator of the Pathways program for the NCRCRD, provided an overview of activities in the region. Gene Summers, University of Wisconsin, spoke on the continued activities of the Rural Sociological Society's Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty. State teams have been organized in all 50 states and the Pacific Island Territories, five regional workshops have been held, and state teams are implementing their visions. *(NCRCRD)*

Pathways from Poverty

Montana's first statewide conference on affordable housing was initiated and organized by the team of seven individuals who attended the Pathways from Poverty training sponsored by the WRDC in 1995. The conference raised awareness across the state of the formidable barriers to low-income housing and spurred one team member, who is also a state legislator, to draft a bill that established a trust fund and provided matching funds for creation of affordable housing. Although the bill died in the appropriations committee, people who attended the statewide conference continue to network their efforts to make safe, affordable housing available to families and individuals.

Fiber optic cables now link villages in three northern New Mexico counties with the regional community college. These lines represent a goal set by the Pathways from Poverty team at the WRDC session and will facilitate the growth of home-based business education. These lines will also assist an effort by the state Educational Opportunity Center to encourage low-income adults to gain higher education.

The Guam Pathways team has made helping families its priority. Out of their planning came a place where parents can acquire the education, skills and support they need to succeed in a changing society. Courses range from GED preparation to early childhood development. Adjacent to the classrooms is a child care center (Our Children's Room) directed by the parents who are taking courses.

With financial support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the WRDC organized a regional workshop in 1995 for representatives of state groups concerned with rural poverty. The workshop provided an opportunity to facilitate collaboration and networking among state organizations, and specific activities were identified to help families in financial trouble. *(WRDC)*

Program Leaders Committee

More than 150 participants from the 1890 and 1862 institutions in the South participated in the 8th Annual meeting of the Southern Region Program Leaders meeting August 27-30 in Tallahassee. "Building Collaborative Partnerships" was the theme. In addition to serving on committees, SRDC staff coordinated logistics, hotel contracts, bookkeeping, registration and material preparation. The Center recoups out of pocket expenses through registration fees. *(SRDC)*

Rapid Growth Communities

Managing Community Growth is a 20-minute video that explores management techniques used by several Rocky Mountain communities that are being inundated by rapid growth. *Communities Responding to Rapid Change* consists of three case studies (Summit County, Colorado; Teton County, Idaho; and Flathead County, Montana) and a concept paper. Together these materials can serve as the starting point for discussion in other communities across the country that are coping with similar conditions of rapid growth. The video was produced by David Sharpe, Montana State University Extension Service. The case studies and concept paper were prepared by Tom Gallagher, WRDC program coordinator. *(WRDC)*

The Reference Book on Regional Well-being, U.S. Regions, the Black Belt, Appalachia

SRDC Publication #203 is the product of a study funded by the Center. Ronald C. Wimberley, North Carolina State University, and Libby V. Morris, University of Georgia, produced the book that analyzes the poverty, education, unemployment, and dependence within and across the four major U.S. regions and two Southern subregions. Each condition is analyzed in terms of region, race and rurality. Along with the text, results are presented in three maps, 15 spreadsheet tables and 36 graphs. *(SRDC)*

Rural Health Conference

The Southern Rural Development Center led in developing a regional educational training titled "Building Partnerships for Rural Health in the South." The planning committee represents 1862 and 1890 Extension Services, State Offices of Rural Health, State Primary Care Associations and the medical community. The training will be November 12-14 in Biloxi, Mississippi. Farm Foundation and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation provide external funding. These funds will provide mini-grants to support state teams in their efforts to work in rural communities within each of the respective states. *(SRDC)*

Second National Minority Rural Health Conference

SRDC served as a co-host for the National Rural Health Association's health conference. Discussion centered on the opportunities provided by the Cooperative Extension Service in helping communities make decisions regarding health care. The Center's presentation highlighted community resources available throughout the Southern region. SRDC kept the Community Development and Family and Consumer Science program leaders informed about opportunities for collaborative partnerships developed during the conference. *(SRDC)*

Teen Assessment Project (TAP) Impact

A program that created community awareness about youth-at-risk was developed, piloted and implemented in rural communities in Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire. The Teen Assessment Project helped youth, parents, educators and communities become aware of the problems faced

by youth-at-risk and the importance of offering education, health programs and support to them. Prompted in part by TAP, programs that contribute to the healthy development of youth and teens have developed in several communities involved with this project. *(NERCRD)*

Workforce Preparation National Initiative

The NCRCRD is taking on the initial research coordination for the Workforce Preparation National Initiative through CSREES-USDA. This initiative links individuals, households and community to develop appropriate school to work, welfare to work, and work to work programs. *(NCRCRD)*

5. Facilitating Development of Policies that Enhance the Well-being of Rural People and Small Towns

The dramatic changes in federal policies, such as the end of commodity programs and welfare reform, have many implications for state and local areas that will require policy response at those levels. Many programs of the Regional Rural Development Centers are designed to provide local governments of small and rural towns with current research into policy alternatives.

After School Education and Enrichment Model for School-Aged Youth

This SRDC-funded project designed an educational model to improve the academic performance, to build self-confidence and to prepare students K-8 to be productive members of society. Alcorn State University conducted the program in three southwest Mississippi school districts. Orlenthea McGowan is the principal investigator. Results have shown marked improvements in the areas addressed. The project involved the 1890 land grant colleges and universities, parents, community-based organizations, and public and private sector agencies in the educational process to improve students' successes. An After School Model Implementation Guidebook is being developed for publication through SRDC. *(SRDC)*

Champion Communities

Communities that made applications through the Empowerment Zone/ Enterprise Community program of the federal government for funds to implement their strategic plans but did not receive funding were designated Champion Communities. One hundred twenty-two of the 194 designated Champion Communities are in the Southern region. The SRDC first became involved with the CCs through the Mississippi Champion Communities at their state meeting. The community representatives of the CCs confirmed the need for active involvement and strategies to support the designated communities across the region. The first step in expanding support for the CCs began in a four-state area–Alabama, Georgia, Florida and South Carolina. The Center is helping organize a regional meeting involving teams from the 30 CCs in these states and representatives from agencies, organizations and institutions. The workshop is planned for late spring 1998. The Center is also seeking extramural funds for travel for the

CC teams. If this process is as successful and beneficial to the CCs as anticipated, the SRDC will implement similar efforts in other subregions of the South. Procedures and outcomes experienced in the South will be shared with the sister Regional Rural Development Centers to promote success among the Champion Communities throughout the nation.

As a continuing effort to provide support to CCs, SRDC forwarded a notice of funds available from Hitachi Corporation for community grants. One Arkansas CC prepared a proposal and received more than $100,000 for work in their community. This success reemphasizes the value of regional communication between the Center and Champion Communities in the region. *(SRDC)*

Extension Program Leaders Develop Regional Partnerships

How can the Extension system continue to do more with less? Extension program leaders in the North Central region met in St. Louis on January 28-30, 1997, to discuss regional leadership, partnerships both within and outside of Extension, and sharing resources and staff across state lines. A list of multistate extension programming efforts was compiled for the four program areas: Agriculture and Natural Resources, Community Resource Development, Family and Consumer Sciences, and 4-H Youth Development. Cornelia Flora, director of the NCRCRD, discussed mapping partnerships, and a panel presentation highlighted partnerships that were working effectively across state lines. In addition to multistate programming efforts, there are cases of successfully sharing staff across state lines as well. Specific programmatic opportunities for partnering and sharing resources were identified pertaining to welfare reform, workforce preparedness and managing change in agriculture. Ways to remove barriers that hinder the sharing of resources were also identified, including consulting and honorariums, copyrights and intellectual property, promotion and tenure, public accountability, and tight budgets. The group confronted the contradictions of traditional approaches and new realities. *(NCRCRD)*

Factors Influencing Local Decision-Maker's Choice of Economic Development Policies

Extension specialists are examining why local decision-makers in rural areas choose either business retention and expansion strategies or industrial recruitment as a means of economic development. This study will draw from the disciplines of economics and sociology. The outcome will be a

better understanding of incentives for policy adoption. As incentives are better understood, specialists and agents will be better prepared to design extension programming in economic development. *(NERCRD)*

Fund for Rural America

The Center took a pro-active role in keeping rural development professionals in the Southern region informed about the competitive grant fund through USDA. In cooperation with Tom Helms, executive director of the Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors, SRDC established a communication network with persons interested in the FRA and provided updates throughout the process. The Center agreed to support travel to develop multistate, multidisciplinary teams to write proposals in response to the request for proposals. Seven requests were received; four were funded for a total of about $11,000. *(SRDC)*

Fund for Rural America Award

The Southern Rural Development Center applied for and received a center planning grant from Fund for Rural America, a competitive grants program of USDA. The SRDC proposal was combined with one from the Rural Policy Research Institute and the National Association of Counties. The three institutions formed a partnership and are developing a full proposal for a Center for Policy Devolution and the Rural South. The proposed Center will enable residents of the rural South and other selected subregions of the United States to adjust to federal initiatives that are shifting responsibilities and risks from the federal level to individuals, states and local governments. It will undertake policy analyses to assess the likely impact of devolution policies on rural people and places in the South. Strategies for ameliorating the negative impacts of devolution will be explored as well. Furthermore, technical assistance will be available for local decision makers seeking access to quantitative analytic models and other decision-support tools commonly available only to leaders situated in metropolitan locales. An additional component of the proposed Center's work will focus on the design and delivery of needed outreach education and training activities that can further enhance the capacity of rural communities to develop and implement action plans that effectively deal with policy devolution impacts at the local level. *(SRDC)*

Northern Great Plains Rural Development Commission

The Northern Great Plains Rural Development Commission has completed a 10-year rural development strategy for the five-state region (North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota and Iowa). The Commission identified six broad themes that address larger issues in the Northern Great Plains. These themes touch how we work and do business, how we connect with the rest of the world, how we live and govern, and how we create a future for the region that includes young and old a like. Seventy-five actions have been recommended that the region can take to address the concerns raised in the Northern Great Plains Rural Development Act. Work can begin immediately on some of the actions, others must weave their way through the state and federal legislative processes, and some actions will take far longer to be implemented. They represent a realistic assessment of what states, businesses, local governments, community organizations and the federal government can do together as partners to impact the economic future of the region.

In September 1997, the Northern Great Plains Initiative for Rural Development was established as a natural evolution of the Northern Great Plains Rural Development Commission. The Initiative is a 501c3 not-for-profit corporation and will focus its efforts on providing support and leadership toward implementing the Commission's 75 recommendations for action. The NGP Initiative for Rural Development will be governed by a Board of Directors comprised of both business and community leaders from throughout the region. A management team of five rural development leaders-one from each of the five states in the region-has also been established to provide volunteer staff services to the Initiative. *(NCRCRD)*

Obtaining Care: Self-Care Practices and Barriers to Accessing Health Care Services Among Poor Families with Children in the Rural Northeast

Through in-depth personal interviews, two Penn State researchers will study and describe the types of health care access barriers encountered by rural poor families in New York and Pennsylvania. Researchers also will describe these families' reaction to health care barriers, and investigate and describe ways in which families cope with illness through self-care practices, self-treatment, and they will explore the consequences of illness for their well-being. *(NERCRD)*

Property Rights: Looking at Various Aspects and Effects

A set of materials is in production that agents at all levels will be able to use in educational programs to bring focus to local property issues. The topics to be discussed include: Common, Native American and Public Property Rights; Evolution of Property Rights; Private Property Rights; and Property Takings. The papers will be published by the WRDC and presented at the National Public Policy Education Conference in September 1998. *(WRDC)*

Public Lands

The Western Rural Development Center has supported regional faculty in the preparation and submission of a public lands research proposal to the National Research Institute and two related proposals to the Fund for Rural America. The Western Regional Evaluation of Social and Economic Impacts of Public Land Policy was funded and will be administered through New Mexico State University. The Policy Center for Western Public Lands received a Fund for Rural America establishment grant and will be administered through the University of Nevada, Reno. *(WRDC)*

Southern Legislative Conference Presentation

SRDC secured speakers from the Southern land-grant community for a "Block Grants and the Implications on Rural Communities" presentation during the fall meeting of the Southern Legislative Conference. John Lee, Mississippi State University, Lou Swanson, University of Kentucky, and Tom Johnson, Virginia Tech, participated on the panel during a plenary session. There has been continuing dialogue with the Southern Legislative Conference and opportunities for collaborative work regarding the SRDC Fund for Rural America planning grant. *(SRDC)*

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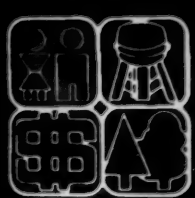

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